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LETTER DATED 30 JANUARY 1991 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In accordance with paragraph 4 of resolution 678 (1990), I wish, on behalf of my Government, to submit the following report on actions undertaken pursuant to paragraphs 2 and 3 of that resolution, further to our report submitted on 22 January 1991 (S/22130).

Since that report, the military forces of the coalition, including United States military forces, acting in accordance with Security Council resolution 678 (1990), have continued their air action against Iraq's military targets. Our targeting effort is concentrated on military support, military production and military storage capabilities. In this regard, Republican Guard and surface-to-surface missile capabilities remain as high priority targets. Over 25,000 coalition air sorties have been carried out since hostilities began on 16 January.

I would like to stress that the allied aircraft involved in these attacks are taking every precaution to avoid civilian casualties. These pilots are in fact placing themselves in greater danger in order to minimize collateral damage and civilian casualties. While some damage and casualties to non-military targets may occur as a result of coalition bombing, it is also possible that Iraqi anti-aircraft weapons systems may cause collateral damage and civilian casualties. Despite false reports by Iraqi authorities there is no evidence of damage caused by coalition forces to the four main Shiah holy sites in Iraq.

As of 29 January, United States forces have lost 11 aircraft. Other coalition forces have also suffered losses. In addition, 14 United States military personnel have been reported as missing in action, 7 of whom have been classified as prisoners of war.

The naval forces of the United States have also engaged Iraqi patrol and mine-laying craft in the Northern Arabian Gulf. As of 29 January, seven such vessels have been confirmed to have been sunk or badly damaged. The United States Navy has also found and destroyed at least 33 mines in the same area.

The coalition naval forces continue maritime interception operations under the relevant Security Council resolutions. The total number of intercepts since the operation began is now over 7,000 with a total of 837 boardings by coalition forces.

On 29 January, in a further demonstration of Iraq's aggressive intent towards its Arab neighbours, Iraqi ground forces invaded Saudi Arabia at three different locations along the Kuwait/Saudi Arabia border. Preliminary reports indicate heavy losses of both personnel and equipment on the Iraqi side and light losses to coalition forces.

As of the morning of 29 January, Iraq has fired 53 surface-to-surface missiles - 27 at Saudi Arabia and 26 at Israel. Particularly in regard to Israel, Iraq has targeted these missiles against civilian areas in an obvious sign of Iraqi disregard for civilian casualties.

United States forces have captured 105 members of the Iraqi armed forces. In accordance with the Third Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Prisoners of War, on 24 January, the United States provided access to delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to wounded Iraqi prisoners of war (POWs) at a military hospital in eastern Saudi Arabia. On 28 January, ICRC delegates were flown to a POW camp in eastern Saudi Arabia and visited 91 other Iraqi POWs.

Iraqi authorities have not granted ICRC delegates access to any POW and have reportedly used United States and other allied POWs as "human shields" in direct violation of the Third Geneva Convention. The Iraqi Government has claimed that this action has cost the life of one prisoner. Such treatment is outrageous and Iraq must understand that such actions constitute war crimes.

In a further development, I would like to report that at least 80 Iraqi aircraft (35 per cent of which are civilian and military transports and 65 per cent of which are fighter aircraft and bombers) have flown to airfields in Iran. We note that on 26 January the Supreme National Security Council of Iran made a statement that Iran would impound any aircraft which landed in Iran until the end of hostilities.

In a development with potential devastating consequences for the environment of the Gulf, we would like to report that a vast oil slick occurred in the northern Gulf this week. Iraqi occupation forces created this slick by opening the Sea Island terminal pipelines and an oiling buoy on approximately 19 January, allowing oil to flow directly into the northern Gulf. We have evidence that Iraqi forces simultaneously emptied five oil tankers moored at piers at the Mina al-Ahmadi oil field. As of 28 January the resulting oil slick is at least 35 miles long and 10 miles wide. This is the largest oil slick in history.

On 26 January after full consultation with oil and environmental experts and the Governments of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, United States aircraft destroyed two manifold areas used for pumping oil along pipelines. We believe this action has halted the discharge of oil into the Gulf. At the request of the Government of

Saudi Arabia, the United States dispatched expert personnel and specific equipment to help contain the slick and minimize its environmental impact. Several other countries have also sent teams to provide assistance.

I should be grateful if you would circulate this letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Thomas R. PICKERING